

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, CA

SUBJECT: UNION NATIONALE CHANGES LANGUAGE POLICY

1. QUEBEC'S UNION NATIONALE PARTY HAS SCRAPPED ITS FREEDOM OF CHOICE POLICY ON LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION AND HAS ANNOUNCED A PLATFORM THAT WOULD SEND ALL NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING IMMIGRANTS TO FRENCH SCHOOLS. WITH THIS REVERSAL OF PARTY'S LANGUAGE POLICY AS EXPLAINED IN RECENT ELECTION CAMPAIGN, UN HAS OPTED IN FAVOR OF A MODIFIED VERSION OF PARTI QUEBECOIS WHITE PAPER RELEASED EARLIER THIS MONTH. PARTY LEADER RODRIGUE BIRON ANNOUNCED THE MAJOR POLICY REVISIONS AT THE END OF A STUDY SESSION HELD SATURDAY. UN POLICY WOULD STILL GIVE ENGLISH COMMUNITY A BETTER BREAK THAN THE PQ PROPOSALS WILL IF THEY ARE PASSED INTO LAW. BUT UN PLAN IS ALSO DESIGNED TO MAKE FRENCH THE PROVINCE'S "PRE-EMINENT" LANGUAGE. BIRON TOLD AUDIENCE AT PARTY CONGRESS THAT HE NOW AGREES WITH CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT MINISTER THAT QUEBEC MUST BECOME AS FRENCH AS ONTARIO IS ENGLISH.

2. PRINCIPAL DEPARTURE FROM WHITE PAPER IS IN AREA OF EDUCATION. WHERE PQ WOULD LIMIT ACCESS TO ENGLISH SCHOOLS TO CHILDREN WITH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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A PARENT EDUCATED IN ENGLISH IN QUEBEC, UN PROPOSES TO OPEN SYSTEM TO ALL WHOSE MOTHER TONGUE IS ENGLISH. THIS IS BASICALLY SAME AS FORMER LIBERAL GOVERNMENT'S LANGUAGE LEGISLATION--LAW 22-- OF 1974. BIRON GAVE NO DETAILS ON HOW HE WOULD DISTINGUISH BETWEEN ANGLOPHONE AND NON-ANGLOPHONE NEWCOMERS. HE DID TELL JOURNALISTS, HOWEVER, THAT HE WOULD NOT USE THE LANGUAGE TESTS WHICH CAUSED LIBERAL'S SO MUCH TROUBLE. UN PROMISES TO RECOGNIZE HISTORIC

FACT OF ENGLISH COMMUNITY AND RESPECT ANGLOPHONES AS "AN ARTICULATE COLLECTIVITY." OTHERWISE, BIRON WENT ALONG WITH WHITE PAPER. ALTHOUGH SURPRISED BY UN POLICY DECISION, SOLE ANGLOPHONE UN DEPUTY WILLIAM SHAW SAID HE WOULD GO ALONG WITH POLICY AS IT STILL RECOGNIZES THERE SHOULD BE TWO OFFICIAL LANGUAGES IN QUEBEC.

3. BIRON SAID PARTY WAS NOT CHANGING ITS MIND BUT MAKING SOME DETAILS OF ITS LANGUAGE POLICY CLEARER. NONETHELESS, NEW UN POSTURE DOES MOVE PARTY MUCH CLOSED TO PQ LANGUAGE WHITE PAPER AND LEAVES QUEBEC WITH NO POLITICAL PARTY WITH A LANGUAGE POLICY DESIGNED TO MAKE FRENCH LESS THAN PRE-EMINENT. THIS CHANGE IN UN POLICY WAS PROMULGATED BY BIRON HIMSELF AFTER A DAY OF SPEECHES REPRESENTING ALL SHADES OF OPINION ON LANGUAGE ISSUE. HOWEVER, NO VOTE OF DELEGATES WAS TAKEN AND SOME OBSERVERS FELT THAT MAJORITY ACTUALLY FAVORED CONTINUATION OF FREEDOM-OF-CHOICE POLICY RATHER THAN OPTION BIRON ANNOUNCED. BIRON'S ACTIONS WERE AT LEAST CONSISTENT WITH HIS COMMENTS IN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WHERE HE HAD PRAISED WHITE PAPER WARMLY, CALLING ONLY FOR PROTECTION OF MINORITY RIGHTS.

4. COMMENT: BIRON AVOIDED DIFFICULT PARTY BATTLE OVER LANGUAGE POLICY BY INTERPRETING AUDIENCE OPINION ARBITRARILY IN MAKING HIS PARTY'S POLICY ALMOST AN ECHO OF WHITE PAPER EXCEPT ON STATUS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE. THIS EXCEPTION ALLOWED HIM CONTINUE ASPIRE TO HAVE SUPPORT OF ENGLISH VOTERS WHO ARE NUMEROUS IN MANY OF 10 EASTERN TOWNSHIP RIDINGS PARTY NOW HOLDS AND DOMINANT IN SHAW'S POINTE CLAIRE RIDING. MORE AND MORE MASTER OF HIS PARTY'S MACHINERY, BIRON CONTINUES TO FOLLOW HIS SELF-PROCLAIMED NEW STYLE OF OPPOSITION WHEREBY HE APPROVES OUTWARDLY OF "GOOD" LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PQ DECISIONS AND POLICIES AND OPPOSES ONLY "BAD" ONES. NOTWITHSTANDING THE UNEASINESS OF UN OLD TIMERS OVER THIS POLICY, BIRON HOPES IT WILL INCREASE UN CREDIBILITY AMONG YOUNGER QUEBECOIS AND ALLOW UN FORM GOVERNMENT AFTER NEXT ELECTION. BIRON PRACTICED HIS NEW STYLE OF OPPOSITION SATURDAY BY CRITICIZING HARSHLY PQ BUDGET WHICH HE FEELS FAILS TO TACKLE NEED TO GET ECONOMY MOVING AGAIN. HE CHALLENGED PQ TO PUBLISH WHITE PAPER ON ECONOMIC FUTURE OF QUEBEC. WHETHER HE CAN INCREASE PARTY'S 18 PERCENT OF POPULAR VOTE BY THIS NEW STYLE REMAINS TO BE SEEN, BUT HE IS SUCCEEDING IN GIVING UN MORE POSITIVE AND AGGRESSIVE IMAGE. VICE PRIME MINISTER, JACQUE-IVAN MORIN, TOLD ME RECENTLY THAT HE EXPECTS UN TO OUTSTRIP LIBERALS IN FUTURE AND BECOME OFFICIAL OPPOSITION.

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